

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration FormVLR 8/21/90
NRHP 1/24/91
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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 18). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Office Hall VDHR file # 48-16
other names/site number _____

2. Location

city, town King George Court House ☒ vicinity Office Hall
state Virginia coda VA county King George code 099 zip code 22485

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>2</u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this
☐ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 38 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.
☐ removed from the National Register.
☐ other. (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Secondary structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLEEARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICKwalls BRICKWOOD: weatherboardroof METAL

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Office Hall is a former eighteenth-century plantation in southeastern King George County. The site is marked today by two largely unaltered early-nineteenth-century brick outbuildings: a two-story detached kitchen and a large, pyramidal-roofed smokehouse. These structures stand side-by-side facing the highway a few yards north of State Route 3 near its intersection with U.S. Route 301. Built circa 1805-20, the kitchen is one of the very few one-room-plan, two-story brick plantation kitchens recorded in the state. It exhibits several unusual features, including formal Federal detailing, an odd hierarchy of brickwork patterns, and a second-story room originally accessible only by an exterior stair. The coeval smokehouse, which is connected to the kitchen by an early-twentieth-century frame storage shed and garage, features an unusual roof structure. In order to create unencumbered roof space for hanging meat, its builders dispensed with tie beams, instead using false joists fastened to outriggers that rest atop all four walls.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The Office Hall property is a level, open tract on the north side of Route 3, a major corridor running along the spine of the Northern Neck. The property's western boundary is defined by Route 301, a heavily traveled north-south highway linking Baltimore and Richmond. This major rural intersection is marked today by small roadside businesses on three of its four corners. The other, northeast corner, is occupied by the Office Hall tract, which is currently scheduled for

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

ARCHITECTURE

Ca. 1805-1820

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Office Hall is the remaining core of an eighteenth-century farmstead in southeastern King George County. The farm was the birthplace and childhood home of William "Extra Billy" Smith (1797-1887), U.S. congressman, Confederate general, and twice governor of Virginia. The once-extensive plantation is represented today by two early-nineteenth-century brick outbuildings: a smokehouse and a two-story kitchen. The kitchen served, at various points in its history, as servants' lodgings and as the meeting place of a private school. Both these buildings, which remain remarkably unaltered, possess rare architectural features illustrating the broad repertoire of the vernacular Virginia builder. These outbuildings stand together in a rural setting at the intersection of Routes 3 and 301; because of their prominent location and distinctive architectural forms, they have served for decades as landmarks to passing motorists.

JUSTIFICATION OF CRITERIA

Office Hall is being nominated to the register under Criterion C. The nominated acreage includes the two surviving antebellum buildings on the property. Both exhibit rare architectural

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

☒ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .275 acres (11981 sq. ft.)

UTM References

A 18 311880 4234320
Zone Easting Northing

C

B
Zone Easting Northing

D

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

☒ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This small quarter-acre parcel includes both of the contributing buildings, and constitutes all the land under historic easement with Historic Fredericksburg Foundation. The land surrounding this acreage is to be developed into a shopping center and housing development in the near future.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

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date July 1990

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large-scale mixed-use development that will include retail, office and dwelling units. The area being nominated to the National Register includes a quarter-acre lot immediately surrounding the two early-nineteenth-century outbuildings; this is coterminous with the historic easement that the developers granted the Historic Fredericksburg Foundation in 1989.

Aside from the two nominated structures on the quarter-acre lot, several related buildings stand on the larger Office Hall tract. The most conspicuous of these is a commodious two-story frame farmhouse built circa 1916-18. This dwelling replaces an earlier one-and-a-half-story frame plantation house erected in the second half of the eighteenth century. Both the kitchen and smokehouse stand on axis with the main house and, like it, face south toward Route 3, the former Ridge Road between King George Court House and Oak Grove. Standing on the north and east sides of the nominated buildings are three small twentieth-century structures: a pumphouse, chicken coop, and hog shelter. All these twentieth-century buildings are scheduled for demolition in the near future.¹

The kitchen

The kitchen is a one-room-plan structure measuring twenty feet wide by eighteen feet deep. It has a two-bay front and a steep gable roof containing an unfinished loft. The first story is built at ground level, and the building has no basement or cellar. Cooking facilities were provided by a large main-floor fireplace feeding into an interior end chimney. Built flush with the wall, the interior chimney lends the building a more refined and formal appearance than would a protruding end chimney.

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There is only one entry on the ground floor of the kitchen building; in contrast to contemporary farmhouses, there is no rear or side entry. Another interesting feature is the original lack of interior communication between the first and second floors; instead, the upper floor was reached via an exterior stair leading to a second-floor door in the west gable end. Today this doorway to the second-floor room remains intact, but the exterior stair was removed in the 1940s.² The second floor of the building, which has no fireplace and which may have been unheated until the present century, no doubt served a variety of functions over the years. It may have been designed to serve as a schoolroom, later being used as quarters for the cook or other servants, or as a storage space for plantation supplies. An early door in the west gable end of the tall attic, immediately above the second-story door, indicates that the unfinished loft, too, was used for storage.

The walls of the kitchen are built of well-fired, slightly larger-than-average bricks. These walls are laid up in an odd combination of Flemish and American bonds. The more attractive and expensive Flemish bond is used at second-floor level, and in the more visible areas of the building, while the cheaper American bond is employed elsewhere. On the south front the brickwork is entirely of Flemish bond. In contrast, on the end and rear walls, Flemish bond is used only on the upper story, with three-course American bond being used on the first-floor walls and in both gables above the eaves line. This hierarchy of decorative effect implies that the room on the second floor was regarded as the more important one (this is also implied by the room's interior trim and its intended, but never executed, plaster walls). It seems likely that the masons working at Office Hall may have reflexively treated the grade-level story as they would a basement, according the best brickwork to the upper, or "main" floor, which was reached by an exterior stair analogous to the main exterior stair of a house with tall or grade-level basement.

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The walls of the kitchen, which were at one time painted white on the exterior, are thirteen inches thick at main-floor level and ten inches thick at second-floor level. Where Flemish bond is employed, closer bricks define doors, windows and wall corners. Mortar joints have a V profile and display penciling, though most of this penciling has weathered away. All openings are topped with widely-splayed false, plaster jack arches, giving the building a relatively formal appearance. A few putlog holes, now filled with wooden blocks, are visible on the west gable end (where the former exterior stair tied into the wall) and north facade. The corbelled chimney cap appears to be original and unaltered. The threshold of the main-floor door is reached by a single step formed from fragments of one or more recycled millstones of dark purplish hue.

Windows and doors retain their original simple Federal-period wooden casings (these are very weathered). The six-over-six-light sashes in the windows are probably original. The simple boxed wooden eaves boards and bed moldings are original, though decayed in places. The tapering, beaded rakeboards are also original, though badly weathered. The roof of the building is sheathed in standing-seam metal painted red, which replaces the original wooden shingles.

Kitchen interior

The interior of the kitchen is completely plain, featuring white-painted, bare brick walls and exposed floor joists. The ground floor originally had wooden flooring, but this was replaced by the present cement slab in the 1940s. Window and door openings lack any decorative finish. The present matching closets on either side of the chimney breast were installed in this century, probably incorporating doors and other materials from the old mansion house next door, which was demolished around 1916.

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The fireplace was once the most prominent feature in this room. Originally it measured 5'-10" wide, but it was decreased to about three feet in width in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century; today, even that opening is bricked in. The simple wooden mantel shelf dates to the nineteenth century but may be a replacement. It consists of a plain shelf with rounded ends, supported by a single curved-profile bracket at either end.

The ceiling on the main floor is 7'-11" high (measuring to the bottoms of the exposed joists). The joists themselves are hewn rather than sawn. The present rudimentary openstring stair was added by the former owner's father, Thomas Lee Marshall, in the 1940s; originally there was no communication between the two floors. The front door, made of vertical boards, is a twentieth-century replacement.

The second floor of the building is finished in a manner similar to the first floor, but here the brickwork has gap mortar joints. The visual effect is of a wall missing half its mortar, but the mortar has not fallen out; it was like this originally. The mortar joints may represent sloppy workmanship, but more likely they indicate that the walls were meant to be plastered, with the joints being left empty to provide a key for plaster that was never applied.

The walls in this room have been whitewashed, but the exposed joists have not. On this floor, like the lower one, the joists have been hewn and adzed, not sawn. It appears that there was originally no fireplace opening on this floor, but a stove flue was inserted at some time--possibly not until the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The windows on this floor have simple architrave casings with beaded interior edges and an applied cyma molding at the outer edges. The moldings on this floor--which are absent on the main floor--further suggest that this room was originally intended to be plastered. The railing around the top of the twentieth-century stair

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is made of early, recycled beaded boards. The door frame at the west gable end (which originally opened onto the exterior stair) is original, but the door itself is a modern replacement.³

There is a small opening to the attic at the northeast corner of the room, beside the chimney breast. Since it was made by simply sawing out floorboards, it is hard to determine when it was created. The attic, with its steeply-pitched roof, contains a great deal of storage space, and was no doubt used for storage in the nineteenth century, as is suggested by its west gable-end loading door. Roof framing is typical of the period. Rafters--some if not all are of oak--are roughly hewn and waney, being joined at the ridge by a standard mortice-and-tenon joint; the rafter feet rest on a standard board falseplate. There are a single set of collar beams, half-lapped over the rafters.

Historical functions of the kitchen

Detached kitchens were standard elements of Virginia farmsteads from the colonial era through the antebellum period. That the two-story brick building at Office Hall was erected to serve as a kitchen is indicated by its large cooking fireplace and its location close to the main dwelling and next to the smokehouse.

Local tradition (of uncertain vintage) holds that the two-story brick structure at Office Hall served as a slave quarters, but this claim remains unsupported.⁴ It is quite possible, however, that the second floor of the building was used as lodging for a cook or other servant at some period in time. The loft in antebellum kitchens--even when unheated--was often used as a cook's

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quarters, and several other surviving Virginia kitchens have exterior stairways--or interior stairways that are entered from the outside. (An example of the former is the one-and-a-half-story kitchen at Point of Honor in Lynchburg.)⁵ Indeed, a building quite similar to the one at Office Hall (a two-story, one-room-plan brick kitchen with exterior gable-end stair--albeit a somewhat smaller, plainer building) once stood behind the Elizabeth Galt House in Richmond. In this century, if not before, the second floor of this kitchen was used as servants' quarters.⁶

It seems clear that the main floor of the two-story building at Office Hall was originally intended (and used) as a kitchen, but it may also have housed other domestic functions, such as laundering. While it is quite likely that the second floor of the kitchen sheltered servants at at least some point in its history, it served other functions as well. For a time it was used as a schoolroom, according to the testimony of Mrs. Thomas Lee Marshall, who lived at Office Hall in the 1910s or earlier.⁷ The presence of decorative window trim and gap-jointed masonry (the latter implying that the second floor was originally intended to be plastered) suggests that it originally might have been designed to serve as either an office, a schoolroom, or as a lodging place for the boys of the family, for overnight guests, or for paying travelers. It should be mentioned that lack of a fireplace would not have precluded most of these functions; in the nineteenth century, some bedrooms in even prosperous households were often unheated. Moreover, the room may have been equipped from an early period with a cast-iron stove.

At some point, the second floor--as well as the attic--may have been used for storage. Most large Virginia farms had one or more storehouses in which valuable foodstuffs and general plantation supplies were kept under lock and key. These buildings were usually small but well-built structures located near the main dwelling. Many, like the two-story, one-room-plan frame

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storehouse at Tower Hill in Sussex County, had an exterior stairway to the second floor or loft.⁸ Bolstering the idea that the Office Hall kitchen was used--at least in part--as a storehouse, is the door in the west-gable loft: this configuration was often employed in warehouses and store buildings in nineteenth-century Virginia. The second floor too had certain advantages that may have encouraged its use as a storage space. Being above the kitchen, it would have served well as a pantry. On the other hand, more valuable goods might have been stored there as well. Certainly keeping valuable goods locked in a second-floor room with no access from below would have provided a measure of security not available in ground-level rooms. However, the presence of unbarred, unshuttered windows on the second floor argues against it being designed as a storeroom from the beginning.

Whatever its original function, the form and detailing of the Office Hall kitchen is unusual. Its exterior walls, with Flemish-bond walls and plaster jack arches, make it a remarkably handsome outbuilding--an exceptional structure built at time when few service buildings received any decorative treatment.

Most detached kitchens in early Virginia were of frame rather than brick construction. Though brick kitchens were less subject to fire and rot than frame ones, they were also more expensive, and few planters were willing to expend the money for a brick outbuilding. Those brick kitchens that do exist are usually associated with large, elaborate brick dwellings.

Even rarer than brick kitchens were two-story kitchens. Most antebellum outbuildings, as well as rural dwellings, were a single story; fewer than a score of two-story antebellum kitchens are known in Virginia. Most of these are exceptionally large, multiroom structures like the kitchen-

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cum-laundry buildings at Chippokes in Surry County and at Upper Brandon in Prince George County.

One-room-plan, two-story kitchens are even rarer. Only two other extant examples are known to this writer: one stands at Much Haddam, a Federal-period farmstead in Loudon County, and another at Rose Hill Farm (1834) in Hanover County. In both cases, the kitchen served a large, impressive, two-story brick dwelling. Nevertheless, at least one case is known of a two-story brick kitchen serving a relatively modest, one-story frame dwelling. The antebellum kitchen at Glencairn, in nearby Essex County--demolished in the early 1970s--was similar in general form to that at Office Hall, but like the examples at Much Haddam and Rose Hill lacked an exterior stair or interior chimney. The main dwelling at Glencairn, which still stands, is a one-and-a-half-story, eighteenth-century dwelling like the former house at Office Hall. Apparently the owner of Glencairn, like Colonel Smith at Office Hall, chose to spend more money than was strictly necessary in order to build a handsome, fire-resistant kitchen. At Office Hall, Smith went one step further, providing such refinements as plaster jack arches and Flemish-bond brickwork, and directing that his kitchen be built in a prominent location facing the well-traveled Ridge Road between Oak Grove and King George Court House.

The Smokehouse

The smokehouse at Office Hall stands seventeen feet east of the kitchen, in exact alignment with it. (A frame shed added in the early part of this century connects the two buildings.) Measuring roughly sixteen feet square, the smokehouse has a single opening: the front door. Like many better-built antebellum smokehouses, it is covered with a pyramidal roof sheathed with wooden shingles.⁹ An unadorned boxed cornice carries around the projecting eaves. The building is

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constructed of the same brick as the kitchen, indicating the two structures were erected at the same time, as an ensemble.

Like the brickwork of the kitchen, that of the smokehouse exhibits curious variations in bonding. While most of the front wall is laid in Flemish bond, part of the upper wall on the right side of the door is laid in three-course American bond. Similarly, as in the case of the kitchen, the less conspicuous side and rear elevations are laid in three-course American bond.

Inside, the smokehouse has a dirt floor and unplastered, unpainted brick walls. To enter one steps up and over the ten-inch-high threshold. The present batten door and door frame are twentieth-century replacements of the originals. Inside, the room is furnished with three tables for salting meat; a broken barrel stands in one corner. There is no masonry hearth on the floor, though there may have been at one time.

Ryland Marshall, who grew up on the farm, recalls that his father, Thomas Lee Marshall, used the smokehouse for curing pork until the 1930s or later. He emphasized that while most King George County farmers in the early twentieth century had meathouses (for salt-curing meat and hanging it for storage), relatively few had smokehouses, where meat was smoked as well as salt-cured. He noted that "If you wanted to **smoke** your meat, you might have to travel a long way [to use the nearest smokehouse]"¹⁰

The most interesting architectural feature of the Office Hall smokehouse is its roof framing. In order to create a maximum amount of unencumbered roof space for hanging slabs of meat--and to make reaching it easier--the builder used an interesting construction feature to eliminate the tie beams that would normally have spanned the tops of the brick walls. Instead, there is only

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a single cross-member (6" x 8"), which in turn supports a central kingpost. The seven-inch-square kingpost rises toward the apex of the roof, where it is capped by a foot-tall, buoy- or cone-shaped block that is designed to receive the tops of the rafters.

The base of this roof structure--the part that supports the rafter feet--consists of false plates tenoned into "outriggers", or headers measuring 7" x 3". These outrigger assemblages rest atop all four brick walls, extending both inward and outward from the wall plane about eight inches. This peculiar roof framing, which is a variation on a type of construction often used in more costly antebellum buildings with hipped or pedimented roofs, provides the necessary armature to create the projecting eaves preferred by Virginia builders since the mid-colonial period. In this smokehouse, the rafter feet rest directly on a false plate, which in turn rests on short false joists that are stabilized by the outriggers. On the exterior of the building, fascia and soffit boards are nailed onto the outriggers and to the undersides of the false joists to create a typical Virginia boxed cornice. At Office Hall, the use of four, rather than the usual two sets of outriggers, is a noteworthy framing feature.

Jeff M. O'Dell

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ENDNOTES

1. For photos and descriptions of the twentieth-century buildings on the property, see VDHR file # 48-16.
2. The shadow of the former exterior stair can still be seen. A Marshall family member has a twentieth-century oil painting of the kitchen showing this stairway in place; in 1971 Ralph Fall took a photo of the painting, which is now in VDHR file # 48-16.
3. The floor of the upstairs room was littered with refuse on inspection in March 1989. An interesting feature, however, was two bundles of papers--mostly receipts for farm supplies--skewered on wires and hung from the ceiling to protect them from insects and rodents. The papers dated from the 1930s through the 1950s.
4. Ralph Fall calls it a slave quarters in his 1971 survey report (see VDHR file file # 48-16). Nevertheless, the distinctive form and detailing of the two-story building at Office Hall indicates that could not have been intended solely as slave quarters. Virginia slave quarters follow standard forms (the most common surviving type features a two-room plan with central chimney and single-story elevations with a loft); never do they have one-room-plan, two-story configurations. The fine exterior detailing on the Office Hall building also argues strongly against such a primary function.
5. I am indebted to Edward Chappell, Director of Architectural Research at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, for providing the Point of Honor example and for sharing his knowledge of antebellum kitchens.
6. This kitchen, destroyed in the 1950s or '60s, is illustrated in Mary Wingfield Scott's Old Richmond Neighborhoods, fig. 267.
7. Ralph Fall, 1971 interview with Mrs. Thomas Lee Marshall (see VDHR file # 48-16). Unfortunately, no further details are given in Fall's report. For example, it is not noted whether the school functioned there in the antebellum or the postbellum period.
8. For an illustration of the antebellum Tower Hill plantation complex, including the storehouse with exterior stair to the second floor, see Kocher and Dearstyne's Shadows in Silver, pp. 108-10.

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9. According to Ralph Fall's 1971 interview with the former owner of Office Hall, the present wood-shingle roof was replaced twice within memory.

10. Interview with Ryland Thomas, 15 March 1989, at Office Hall.

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features that shed light on the broad range of vernacular building forms and practices in early-nineteenth-century Virginia. Although Governor William Smith was born and raised on the property, one cannot make a strong case for eligibility under Criterion B. First, definite association between Smith and the standing buildings cannot be proven; second, Smith's political, business and military careers are better illustrated by properties in other parts of the state.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Office Hall plantation was the ancestral home of Colonel Caleb Smith (1761-1814), father of Virginia governor William Smith (1797-1887). Caleb Smith was a man of wealth and influence in his community; he held a number of local offices and served several terms in the state legislature.¹

His son William was born at the Smith plantation (not known as Office Hall until three decades later) in 1797. The boy grew up on the farm with three brothers and four sisters, and at age seven he began attending an old-field school six miles from home. At ten he traveled to Fredericksburg for private tutoring, and at fourteen he briefly attended Plainfield Academy in Connecticut. Returning to Virginia, he acquired the rest of his education at a private school at his father's plantation and at the celebrated classical academy of Thomas Nelson in Hanover County. (The exact location of the Smith plantation school is not known, but oral tradition states that the two-story kitchen building once housed a private school. It is possible, therefore, that William "Extra Billy" Smith attended school in this structure.)²

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Having demonstrated a keen intellect and an aptitude for study, William was packed off to Fredericksburg at age sixteen or seventeen to study law in the office of Green and Williams. After his apprenticeship there, he worked in the offices of attorneys in Warrenton and Baltimore. In 1818, at the age of twenty-one, Smith opened his own law practice in the town of Culpeper.

William Smith's ambition and exuberance propelled him into business ventures. In 1827 he established a mail-coach service between Fairfax Court House and Culpeper. Smith's mail service expanded dramatically, and he soon earned his lifelong nickname "Extra Billy" from the array of "extra" contracts and payments he received from U.S. postal authorities.

Smith entered the state political arena in the late 1820s, and in 1836 was elected to the Virginia senate as a Democrat. Smith was a commanding and charismatic figure who appealed to the common man as well as to his fellow plutocrats. He rose rapidly in politics, becoming a U.S. Congressman in 1841 and governor of Virginia in 1846. During the Civil War he served the Confederacy as a general, but he proved more effective behind the desk than in the field. From January 1864 to May 1865 he served an unprecedented second term as governor, presiding over the state during the difficult final years of the Civil War. Smith returned home to Warrenton after the war, and lived there quietly until his death in 1887 at age 89.³

Since the exact date of the outbuildings standing today at Office Hall is unknown, it cannot be certain whether William Smith actually knew them as a boy and young man. Architectural evidence points to a probable date of ca. 1805-20, and the land tax books suggest the buildings were standing before 1820. Too, it seems likely they would have been built before the death of Col. Caleb Smith in 1814. On balance, it seems likely that William did know the buildings in his youth; he may even have attended school in the upper room of the brick kitchen.

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The Office Hall tract--which included 1,583 acres--remained in Caleb Smith's estate until 1836. Throughout this period, the house and outbuildings were valued at \$850, a rather low figure that probably reflects the modest size and venerable age of the main dwelling.⁴ In 1837 the tract was conveyed to Thomas Smith. Four years later, another Smith family member sold 100 acres of the tract--including the house and outbuildings--to Richard V. Tiffey.⁵

Tiffey and his family owned the place for the next three decades, and it was during his tenure that the farm began to be listed in the tax books as "Office Hall".⁶ Richard Tiffey (1805-1867), who had been a tavernkeeper at King George Court House in the 1830s, served as sheriff of King George County in the 1850s. His main source of income, however, seems to have been his farming operations at Office Hall; the 1850 census lists him simply as "farmer."

Tiffey married three times. His second wife, whom he wed in 1844 while living at Office Hall, was Mary Riding. In December 1845, a year after her premature death, Tiffey married Sarah A. Washburn, a native of Vermont who had moved to Virginia to work as a schoolteacher. Sarah and Richard Tiffey had four daughters. Richard died in 1867, two years after the close of the Civil War, leaving Sarah, at age fifty, a widow with two teenage daughters to support. Tiffey apparently left his wife in financial straits, because in 1869 she applied for a job at the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, recently formed to preserve George Washington's home in Fairfax County. In her letter of application Sarah Tiffey writes:

I am accustomed to an energetic and systematic mode of life. My circumstances are peculiar in this, that I am thrown entirely upon my own exertions, there being no male members of my family whose duty it is to provide for me. So far as I know the duties of the situation [the post of "secretary", actually a resident

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administrative assistant to the director], I believe that I could satisfactorily discharge them, and do therefore ask you to give me a trial Should you grant my request the widow and fatherless will daily ask God to bless you and will thank you for giving me work to do.⁷

Mrs. Tiffey received the appointment and moved to Mount Vernon in April 1869. She remained there for a year and a half, during which time she kept a lively journal recording her daily round of activities. Though these memoirs have not been published, they remain on file in the organization's library. Tiffey served much of her tenure as acting manager of the Mount Vernon restoration, since the regent, Louisa Bird Cunningham, was often out of state. In late 1870, after a series of health problems and conflicts with the regent, Tiffey took a job with the Treasury Department in Washington. She remained in Washington until her death in the early 1900s.⁸

In the 1870s Thomas Lee Marshall purchased the Office Hall property; his descendants continued to live there for over a century. The Marshall family increased the Office Hall parcel from 100 to 200 acres, and they continued to farm it. In 1916 Thomas Lee Marshall's grandson and namesake demolished the one-and-a-half story colonial dwelling, replacing it with the present two-story Colonial Revival house.⁹

The present owners acquired the property in 1989 with the intention of developing the strategic parcel into a mixed-use shopping center and housing complex. That same year they donated an historic easement to Historic Fredericksburg Foundation to ensure the preservation of Office Hall's two early-nineteenth-century brick outbuildings.

Jeff M. O'Dell

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ENDNOTES

1. John W. Bell, Memoirs of Governor William Smith of Virginia (New York, 1891), pp. 3-10; Alvin A. Fahrner, "The Public Career of William "Extra Billy" Smith," (Chapel Hill, 1953), pp. 1-6; "Popular Portraits with Pen and Pencil: Governor William Smith," The United States Magazine and Democratic Review, Vol. 22, no. 119 (May 1848), pp. 454-55.

In several of these accounts, Col. Caleb Smith is described as "of Marengo." Marengo was a plantation in northeastern King George County along the Potomac River. Smith acquired this tract in 1811, three years before his death. It is uncertain whether he ever lived there; land tax books suggest that Smith continued to reside at Office Hall until his death.

Caleb Smith was the son of Thomas Smith, Jr. (d. ca. 1799) and grandson of Thomas Smith, Sr. (d. ca. 1759). (The author is grateful to James S. Patton, of Rappahannock Academy, for providing this and other related information.)

2. In his 1971 architectural survey report, Ralph Fall writes: "The upstairs [of the kitchen] was once used also as a school-house, according to Mrs. [Thomas Lee] Marshall." (DHR file # 48-16). The anonymous author of "Popular Portrait" (1848) states simply that William Smith attended "a private school taught in his father's house"; he may, however, have been guessing at the exact physical location of the school. Architectural detailing suggests the brick kitchen was erected some time between 1805 and 1820; if it was erected before 1814, it could indeed have housed the school that William Smith attended.

3. Smith was buried in Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond. Today his statue stands in Capitol Square, overlooking the park whose landscaping he actively supervised as governor.

4. The 1820 land tax book for King George County is missing, and, as elsewhere in Virginia, buildings are not assessed separately from land before that date. The name Office Hall first appears in the land tax books after 1840; it also appears in a deed of 1837 (King George County DB 15, p. 72). A marginal note in the 1821 land tax listing states that there was a change in the valuation of buildings that year due to the destruction of an overseer's house. This same entry states that Smith's land stood along "the Ridge Road", which is more or less coterminous with the present Rt. 3.

5. King George County Land Tax Books.

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6. A post office named Office Hall stood near this site in the early twentieth century and perhaps earlier. A search of the listings in two compendia of nineteenth-century Virginia place names and post offices, however, failed to show Office Hall. (Virginus Hall, "Virginia Post Offices, 1798-1859," and Ray O. Hummel, A List of Places Included in 19th Century Virginia Directories.)

7. Elswyth Thane, Mount Vernon is Ours (New York, 1969), p. 373.

8. James S. Patton, "Marshall Family at Office Hall," 1989.

9. Ralph Fall, "Office Hall" historical notes, 1971; and author's interview with Ryland Marshall, 1989. There is some debate about the site of the original dwelling. Fall implies that the present house was built on the foundations of the old one, whereas Ryland Marshall claimed that the old house stood some distance west of the present dwelling.

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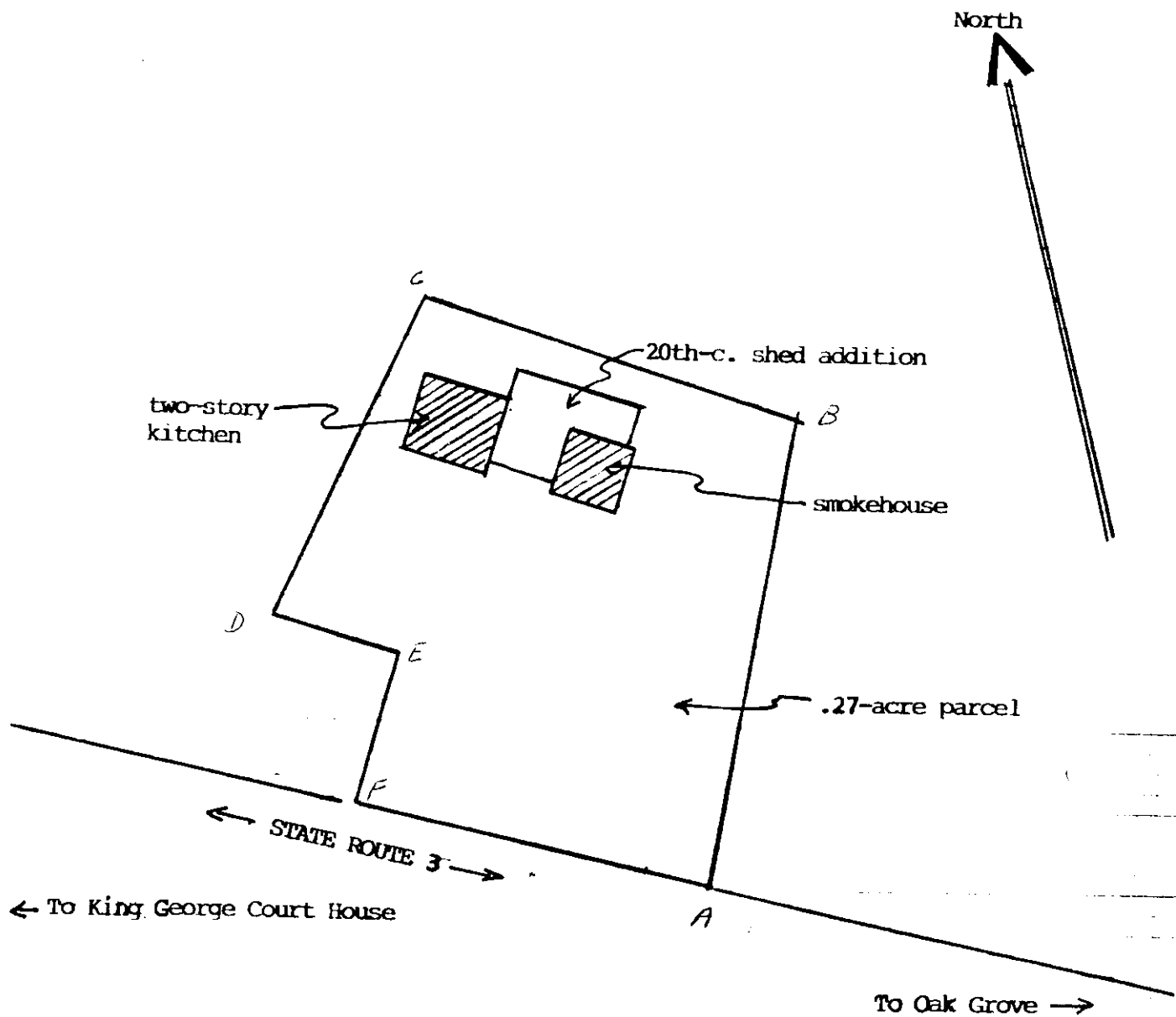
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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated acreage is shown on the accompanying Port Royal, Virginia, 7.5-minute quadrangle map, as well as on an accompanying legal plat. The southeast corner of the parcel begins at Point A, at the north edge of State Route 3. The boundary extends in a straight line NNE for 118' to Point B; then 99' NW to Point C; then 86' SW to Point D; then 31' ESE to Point E; then 40' SW to Point F; then 87' SE to the point of origin.



**Map of OFFICE HALL, King George County Va.
VHDR file # 48-16
NRHP nomination, July 1990**

**Note: This sketch, drawn
to scale, is based on a
1989 legal plat of the
.27-acre parcel under
easement with Historic
Fredericksburg Foundation**

PORT ROYAL QUADRANGLE
VIRGINIA

7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

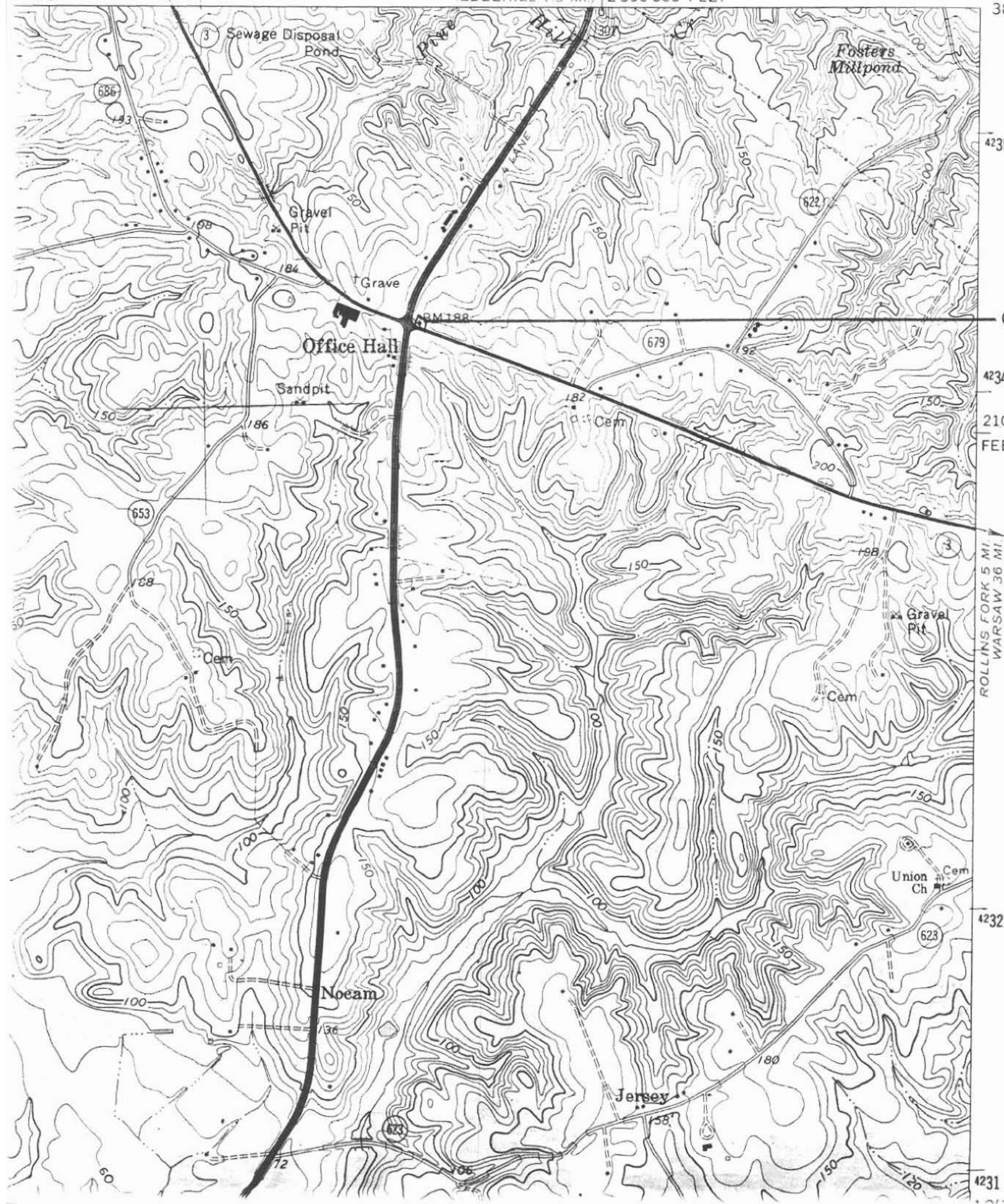
5560 1 SE
(DAHLGREN)

FREDERICKSBURG 21 MI.
KING GEORGE 2.1 MI.

POTOMAC RIVER BRIDGE 11 MI.
EDGEHILL 1.3 MI. 2 390 000 FEET

77°07'30"
38°15'

10'



Office Hall, 48-16

210 000
FEET

ROLLINS FORK 5 MI.
WARSAW 36 MI.

4232

4231